Historical Sketch

of

Saint Francis'-in-the-Fields

Sugartown

Protestant Episcopal

"The first home of St. Francis was situated literally in the fields."

INTRODUCTION

In the course of human affairs there is that concern with the present which oftimes obscures the past...and in so doing deprives men of inspiration and vision for the future. History is the relationship of fact with fact, event with event, attitude with attitude, preparing the stage for the present and giving direction to the future. With a church this is equally true; the beginnings of corporate life are often forgotten and lost in the past. With this thought in mind I requested last summer that an historical sketch of Saint Francis'-in-the-Fields be compiled in order that the story of the infancy and first steps of the congregation would not be lost to the future when the present members have disappeared. For the fulfillment of this purpose, Miss Diane Richmond was asked to be the historiographer of the congregation with the immediate purpose of having such a document placed with other items in the lead box now resting behind our cornerstone. Mrs. Van Gilder, having some skill in the vanishing art of penmanship, prepared the copy which was sealed in the cornerstone.

With the influx of so many new worshippers in recent months, it was decided at the November meeting of the Mission Committee that many would be interested in the background of Saint Francis'-in-the-Fields, Sugartown. With some few minor corrections, therefore, the history, being sent to our entire mailing list, is that which was used at the Cornerstone Laying Service on October thirteenth. To the best of my knowledge this is an accurate history except for one big omission: nothing whatsoever is said about the doorbell-ringing, the house-to-house canvassing, the teaching and physical labor in church school and vacation church school, the women's activities, the chauffeuring for church school, choir, church services, etc., and the plain hard work performed by Miss Richmond. As you read this historical sketch, therefore, please keep in mind the big omission made by Miss Richmond as she wrote this account.

The Rev. Edwin A. Garrett, III
Vicar

SAINT FRANCIS'-IN-THE-FIELDS began as a dream--really as half a dream in the mind of a minister. Alfred H. Whisler, Rector of the Church of the Good Samaritan in Paoli, envisioned two parochial missions--one at the eastern section of his parish, and one in the western section.The eastern section, containing Daylesford, Berwyn, Strafford, and Devon, held the larger number of parishioners; therefore the larger mission was to be established in this area.

Fewer parishioners resided in the western area; Green Tree, Malvern, Frazer, Goshenville, Morstein, etc. This section, lying between Lancaster Pike (Route 30) and West Chester Pike (Route 3), was mainly farms and large estates, but was beginning to be parcelled into building developments.

Looking about his parish, Father Whisler witnessed the building and population increase that was beginning to change The Good Samaritan from a small rural church to one of the largest in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. He hoped that by establishing two missions, the Church of the Good Samaritan could remain what it had always been--a family church.

So from Father Whisler's dream, one mission, ours, was established. God, it seemed, had work for the smaller of the two hoped-for missions. Arrangements were made with the membership of Goshen Grange 121 on Route 352 in Goshenville to rent the old Quaker Meeting House that they had renovated, in which to hold our Sunday services. This building was rented for $10 a week and the provision that our parishioners keep the building clean.

This first home of St. Francis was situated literally in the fields. Often on a summer morning, our choir was accompanied by the bawling strains of a neighboring herd of Aberdeen Angus. Smaller living creatures of the animal kingdom frequently shared our building. There were birds--one flew down the old stove in the hall, frightening several of the women. And there were mice--Chester Bishop, Sr. regularly checked the building each Sunday to see that none of these rodents were present, dead or alive. We all remember the hornets; their nests on the porch sent many of us scurrying into services with something less than a dignified manner. Flies came in droves through the unscreened doors. Ministers and laity alike spent

many a morning brushing these pesky creatures aside. It is likely that Father Whisler considered the cattle, mice, birds and the open fields in which they dwelled when he decided upon the name for our mission. Six years later when we moved to our permanent home in Sugartown, the name was still appropriate--horses now graze in the fields adjacent to the church.

After finding a place to worship, plans were made to call on local families. Laymen and clergy covered many nearby roads, visiting new homes and old farmhouses, and before long, most of the residents in the area knew of this new mission of the Protestant Episcopal Church.

On Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1957, St. Francis had its first service. Father Whisler and Father Crewe were the celebrants at a 9:30 a. m. Communion Service that was attended by one hundred people; mostly parishioners from The Good Samaritan. (It was not until Easter, 1963, with ninety in the congregation, that the attendance came close to duplicating this number.) The Junior Choir of The Good Samaritan led the singing, accompanied by Mrs. Richard Wichert playing the organ given to us by their Church School. The altar, made by William Berkey, was also donated by their Church School. The altar frontal had been made by girls of their Junior Altar Guild. The prayer books were the gift of Christ Church in Pottstown, home parish of William Mills, seminarian in charge at the mission. The pews belonged to the Grange, and our kneelers were ordinary sponge rubber pads. The altar vessels were borrowed as was most everyone who attended that first service. What could be more appropriate than on Thanksgiving Day a church was started!

Those last few weeks of 1957 and early months of 1958 saw few members present. Sometimes, there were only ten, rarely were there more than twenty-five. It was fortunate indeed that the hard working Bishop family was with us at that time. Katherine and Chester, and their children, Chester, Jr., Steve, and Sue, along with Katherine's mother, Mrs. Howard, were to perform many and varied tasks for the new church in the years to come. Chester, the first secretary of the Mission Committee, helped to set up church and take it down, fixed the heater and kept the organ in good repair. Katherine was ever ready

with her artistic talents to paint a sign, sew a seam, design an altar hanging, or teach a class. She was our first women's group chairman, and first Church School superintendent. Rusty and Steve became acolytes, and Sue joined the choir.

The Edwin Churchills, an older couple who were well acquainted with church affairs, worked hard for the mission, but left us all too soon.

Early and active participants at St. Francis were the Lewis Beards, who were not then members of our church. Grace had been the organist at the Malvern Presbyterian Church, and came to the mission to play for us. Later, Grace and Lew were confirmed in the Bishop's Chapel at the Church House in Philadelphia.

The Arthur Comptons on Strasburg Road were among those first visited when our parish began. Art, Jule, and their two daughters, Sandra and Linda had worked in a new church before moving to this area. Jule, with her interest in children, helped at the first Vacation Church School, and Art was to put his carpentry trade to work for St. Francis.

Mrs. Robert Brandhof--Myrt, having grown up in the Episcopal church, brought us her lively enthusiasm. Her sewing ability, her work with our young people, her ever-readiness to help make her an invaluable member.

Our senior citizen was introduced to the mission through the original parish visitation. Mrs. Martha Van Gilder, a life member of the Episcopal Church, was certain of its assets in the world, proud of old family, and was through the years an example of graciousness. She possesses a keen sense of humor and a fine appreciation of life. Mrs. Van Gilder gave a name to our monthly publication--St. Francis Field Notes.

Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Lynn became acquainted with our mission as a result of a home visit by Mr. Mills. Their daughter, Joanne, was the first baby to be baptized at St. Francis, and their other daughter, Diane, was one of the first enrolled in the Church School.

The Glen Humphreys and sons Glen and Michael joined our group during its early days.

Mr. and Mrs. James Tinsman had been very active at The Good Samaritan. They had recently moved from Paoli and felt that they wanted to support this new mission of the church that had always been close to their hearts. Eva, known for her kindness to everyone, took an active part in all the mission's activities, and no one will ever forget her nut cake! Jim, active in Boy Scouts, was our first Rector's Warden. He is known for his quiet good manners, heartfelt interest in each member, and tactful diplomacy. He was most aptly chosen to head our Mission Committee in the formative years.

Miss Diana May Richmond, one of our first members, was interested in and worked for the mission. Many of the local roads became familiar to her through calling on families.

During our first winter, four parishioners from The Good Samaritan offered to teach our Church School. Mrs. William Worth, Mrs. Stead Mauger, Mrs. Carl Force, and Mr. Harry Wilson taught the Fellowship Series. Mrs. Force's son and husband gave additional support by helping to get the building ready for services. Often the teachers outnumbered the children--there were times when the Bishop children were the only ones present. It was indeed a labor of love for these four kind souls to drive over Route 202 on a cold, icy Sunday.

Boys from The Good Samaritan also performed an act of love by serving as our acolytes. The mission did not have any boys who could serve until Father Whisler instructed Rusty Bishop, who earned his God and Country Scouting Award serving and working for the mission. Eric Worth, Carl Force, Clare and Charles Morris stopped at The Good Samaritan each Sunday to pick up their cassocks on their way to St. Francis. Charles Morris later directed the choir.

It was a discouraging winter in many ways. Attendance was low, it was bitterly cold; and several Sundays there were no services due to bad snowstorms. Inadequate heat in our rented building caused many numb fingers and toes. Ill feelings had been created by our establishment, hard as it is to believe, and there were many Sundays when we weren't sure that there would be a service the following week. Unfortunately, a boundary line was drawn, and certain roads west of the mission were set as markers beyond which visiting new fami-

lies was frowned upon.

It was most fortunate for the mission that it had at this time an able spiritual leader, Mr. William E. Mills. He came to the mission while still a divinity student and worked with us until he received a church of his own in 1960. Without his conscientious efforts in our behalf, his guidance, and prayers, it might have seemed easier to us to give up faith in our new venture. He organized a group of seminarians to call on local families, and started a discussion group for adults after Sunday Services in order that new families might better understand the ritual and teachings of the Episcopal Church. Under Mr. Mills, we had our first Christmas Eve candlelight service. He inaugurated a series of Lenten programs, bringing various speakers from the Divinity School. Few of us will forget the Sunday morning when only twelve were present--Mr. Mills looked around and said, "Our Lord had but twelve in the beginning too!"

On Easter Sunday, 1958, a rainy, cold and windy day, members of our mission journeyed to Paoli to witness the dedication of the new Church of the Good Samaritan.

New families came to us as a result of the Vacation Church School which was conducted by Mr. Mills in August, 1958. The Robert Boodys and their seven children, Susan, Barbara, Daniel, David, Elizabeth Ann, Peggy, and Steven were among these. Molly was our first Altar Guild Chairman. Bob taught in the Church School and took his turn on the cleaning schedule. The older Boody children became active in the choir.

Mrs. Thompson Wood enrolled her two grandsons, John and Harry. She brought her talent for flower arrangements, along with gifts of altar linen, vases, prayer books, and a rug to put in front of the altar. Her son Harrison taught in the Church School.

The Hunter Kings and children, Deborah and Steve, came for a time.

The Otto Kilmarx family brought daughter Mary.

The William Reinbolds and children William and Linda were with us in the beginning, but moved after the first year.

During that first summer we were visited at our 11:00 a.m. service by many members of The Good Samaritan, whose services were earlier.

When Church School started in the fall of that year, our own members taught the classes--total enrollment was 19. Miss Diana Richmond taught the kindergarten children; Mrs. Robert Brandhof was the primary class teacher; and Mrs. Chester Bishop was in charge of the junior class.

Since Mr. Mills, then a deacon, could not celebrate Holy Communion, we came to know many men and often wondered who would be the celebrant on Communion mornings. Father Crewe and Father Whisler, who conducted instructed Communion services to acquaint the non-members with this all important service in the church, were often present. Several retired priests, Dr. Guenther, formerly with St. Peter's in the Valley; Mr. Winterstein, formerly at Holy Trinity, West Chester; Mr. Loughnam, a priest in our church who taught at Phelps School in Malvern; all celebrated the Holy Eucharist. When a seminarian was absent, and we had five such young men in the early years, The Good Samaritan sent lay readers, William Higgens, J. Malcolm and Robert A. Wright, to conduct Morning Prayer.

A parishioner of The Good Samaritan, active in the choir, and a staunch friend of the new mission was Mrs. Jane Gordon Fletcher. At the time the mission opened, she offered a piece of her land for the future home of the new church. Undoubtedly, St. Francis would not have moved into its permanent home as soon had it not been for her generosity.

Relations became increasingly difficult--the main issue was a question whether Canon Law had been followed to the letter, and if church protocol and etiquette had been violated. Things came to a stalemate and the mission continued, more or less, from day to day.

In August of 1958 Father Whisler left The Good Samaritan, and Mr. Mills stepped into his place. Mr. Mills sent a fellow seminarian, James McKendrick, to the mission.

Mr. McKendrick, though very different from Mr. Mills, brought, as did each man who came to us, a new side, a different gift and a new aspect of the church. He acquired a bap-

tismal font and bought a paschal candle for us. The Altar Guild will not forget the pillow he brought for the Bible for the altar--bright green and extremely large. He started a Saturday night bowling get-together. He was good for us then; we needed a sense of humor and an outlook that "things are not as bad as they seem". He believed and taught us that we would continue, the mission would succeed, and one day these difficult times would be shadows of the past.

In August of 1959 an Episcopal sign was placed on the Grange property. That year our children went to The Good Samaritan for Vacation Church School, and in the fall a Junior Choir was organized.

The Episcopal Churchwomen, later given the name of St. Dorothy's, had its first meeting. Their first project was to provide red choir robes for the children. Each parent paid the cost of materials, and the women did the sewing. The second project was to make a set of altar hangings, patterned like The Good Samaritan's by Mrs. Bishop. This was the first altar sewing done by the women and we were pleased with the result--purple felt symbols of our Lord's passion were sewed on monk's cloth which was fringed with purple silk.

At the same time the men were busy designing and making a communion rail and a stand for the paschal candle. The communion rail was made in four sections, joined together with hinges, and the women made velvet kneelers for it.

A set of altar vessels, a cross, candlesticks and vases were bought by The Good Samaritan, and, through weekly pledges, the mission members reimbursed the mother church. Another item, a small organ, purchased for the Church School by Mrs. Bishop with money given to us by the Grange, added to our furnishings.

New faces appeared each week and many returned to join the family. The Charles Grace family; Mr. and Mrs. Guy Barnhardt with children, Steven, Charles, Constance and Robert; the Martin Boehme children, Donna, Thomas and Karen; Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Supplee and their daughters Katherine and Patricia. Mrs. Supplee was our women's group secretary for a time. One of the students at the Phelps School, Gordon Bainbridge, was most helpful on Sunday mornings. He served on the altar,

sang in the choir, and even took a stint at baby sitting.

In the beginning of 1959, a new rector came to The Good Samaritan, the Rev. Harry R. Johnson. Father Mills became his assistant. Soon after, Mr. Johnson came to visit St. Francis, and it was largely due to his efforts and work with The Committee on New Sites that tension was eased and relations improved.

During 1959 and 1960 we had cake bakes and demonstrations to raise money for the choir and the Church School. The congregation also participated in covered dish suppers, picnics, and Easter egg hunts.

When Mr. McKendrick left us in May 1960, another seminarian, Mr. James F. Mole, his wife, Ruth and son, Jimmy came out to the mission. Although they were with us for only a year, we learned to love this wonderful family, and many from St. Francis went to The Church of the Holy Comforter in Drexel Hill to see Jim ordained a deacon in May of 1961.

Mr. Mole made an evaluation of our Church School to see how the educational program at St. Francis could be improved and extended--the attendance was now fifty-three.

Many more new families were added at this time. A very active family was the Philip Wilmots, who later moved to Harrisburg. This couple directed the choir, in which their children Ronald and Pamela were members. Pat started the bulletin to keep everyone acquainted with church affairs. She also became the second women's group chairman. Phil was the first treasurer of the mission, and through his efforts, for the first time, our church furnishings were insured.

The Richard Partridges with their children Elizabeth Ann and Paul became interested in St. Francis at this time. Barb taught a Church School class, organized several dinners, and became our third women's chairman.

Neighbors of the Partridges, the Thomas Franklin family, joined the mission bringing children Steven, William and Patty. Beverly, though the mother of a young family, worked with the nursery, the Vacation Church School and became secretary of St. Dorothy's.

The George Laymans came with their daughter Karen Lucinda. Cindy was active in the choir and helped, along with the other older girls and boys at the dinners.

The Anthony Janiecs brought their two daughters, Cindy and Cheryl, and their son was baptized in the church.

The William Little family was with us for a time with their children Kim and William. The A. H. Brisons, whose children did such a good job in the choir, also joined the group.

Mr. and Mrs. John Blackburn, III, began to attend St. Francis at this time accompanied by John, IV, James, and Catherine. Cassie sang in the choir and helped at the dinners.

The William Ingrams met us when their godchild, Peggy Boody, was baptized. Phoebe sold candy at Easter and Christmas to raise money for the church. She taught in the Church School, and she and Bill wrote up the minister's sermons for the Daily Local News. Bill teaches a Church School class, and their sons, Charles and Michael, serve as acolytes.

Mrs. Harlan Webb, active in church work for most of her life, was instrumental in organizing monthly visits to the James C. Smith Memorial Home in Oakbourne. She was the prayer and worship chairman of the women's group, and the first of our family to die. A flag in the new church is dedicated to the memory of this wonderful person.

Mrs. Elmer Farra joined our group about this time, and is a regular attendant at all our women's meetings.

At this time an unofficial Mission Committee was formed. Previously, our Mission Committee was composed of men from The Good Samaritan and, since they did not attend the mission and knew little of its problems, this arrangement was not too satisfactory. The men chosen to represent us were: Mr. James Tinsman, Rector's Warden; Mr. Chester Bishop, Secretary; and Mr. Philip Wilmot, Treasurer.

In July of 1961, St. Francis became an independent mission in the Convocation of Chester. We had a yearly budget of $2,473.00, and were no longer under the guidance of The Church of the Good Samaritan.

After Mr. Mole left, Mr. Garry Gatza and his wife came to work with us for the summer of 1961. Perhaps this young and enthusiastic couple will best be remembered for the Vacation Church School that they conducted that year. It was most successful and very lively! Many times Mr. Gatza's sermons were directed to the children, and many of the old time Bible favorites were renewed in the minds of all. Mr. Gatza, at least in the eyes of the children, was a cross between father, minister, and bobby-sock idol.

Richard Maddock followed Mr. Gatza in September of 1961. He was our last seminarian and was with us only a year. He and Ginny, his wife, and his parents, Dr. and Mrs. Richard Maddock brought new interests. Dick's sermons were exceptionally good, and an inspiration to all of us.

Under Mr. Maddock, more families joined us. Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Archer came, and, upon Mrs. Robert Boody's resignation from the Altar Guild, Marion took over as directress. Mr. Archer worked with the men on items for the Fall Fair. Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Greenawalt came bringing daughters, Ruanne and Edwina. Mr. and Mrs. Morgan Ridington, with children Tommy and Lori, were busy from the start. Marie took charge of the choir and the printing of the bulletin, and Morgan became the mission's treasurer when the Wilmot's moved. Mr. and Mrs. William Melcher, both teachers, worked in the Vacation Church School. Bill is lay reader, and Caroline sings in the choir.

The Joseph P. Taylor family, Joe, Carol, Carol Ann, Joseph Aubin, James Frederick and Catherine Dora, were introduced to the mission by Joe's aunt, Mrs. Archer, and soon they too were busy. Joe and the older children joined the choir, and very often Carol brought and arranged flowers for the altar.

Perhaps one of the finest gestures Dick Maddock made before leaving us was to request that his ordination to deacon take place in The Church of the Holy Trinity in West Chester on May 14, 1962. By so doing, he extended an open and friendly hand to the neighboring church and its rector.

In June of 1962, the Reverend Edwin A. Garrett, III, came to St. Francis; the first ordained priest of our church to serve the mission exclusively. Now we had our own vicar. Mr. Gar-

rett led the young people in a serious study of the Bible at the Vacation Church School that summer.

The winter of 1962 found us busy working on several projects--we repaired and cleaned ten academic robes for the Divinity School, made Advent wreaths for home and church, following a covered dish supper in November, and also made Christmas gifts for the guests of the J. C. Smith Memorial Home and Embreeville State Hospital.

At a public hearing in Willistown township in December, 1962, a zoning change on the land donated by Mrs. Jane Gordon Fletcher was approved, and work was to start on the new building in the spring.

On Christmas Eve, Mr. Garrett conducted a very impressive candlelight service of lessons and carols. This was our last Christmas in the Grange Hall.

Our Annual Parish Meeting was held in February of 1963 following a covered dish supper which was attended by sixty-four people. At this time, Mr. Garrett showed the plans for the new building to the congregation.

A Building Committee was formed, consisting of James R. Tinsman, Morgan T. Ridington, Chester A. Bishop, his wife Katherine, and Miss Diana M. Richmond. This committee was to assist Mr. Garrett in selecting the furnishings for the church.

New officers were elected for St. Dorothy's Chapter. These ladies were to carry over from our life at the Grange to our life in the new building. They are: President, Mrs. Barbara Partridge; Vice President, Mrs. Virginia Barnhardt, Recording Secretary, Mrs. Beverly Franklin, Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Roy Lindley; Treasurer, Mrs. Caroline Melcher, and Mrs. Martha Van Gilder, Devotions.

New families joined us: Mr. and Mrs. Roy Lindley, with children Faith Ellen and Daniel. Mr. Lindley has volunteered much of his time for printing programs and other items necessary to our new church. Mrs. Lindley became corresponding secretary of the women's group, and Faith is a willing and capable member of the Altar Guild.

Mr. and Mrs. Alfred Prime, Mrs. Ruth Matter, Mr. and Mrs.

B. Kenney Tremaine, and Mr. and Mrs. William B. Wilson also joined our group in 1962.

In late March the day of days took place. Ground was broken, and St. Francis'-in-the-Fields was on its way to a permanent home of its own! On April 28th when Bishop Armstrong came to the mission for Confirmation, he visited the site of our new home. At this time the roof trusses were erected.

Our budget for 1963, as of the first of the year, was $4259.36. The Women of the Convocation of Chester gave the mission $5,000.00 to be used toward furnishings for the new church, and many items were donated as memorials and gifts by those interested in St. Francis.

Two young couples joined us this year. They are the Carl E. Schultzes with children Karen Lee, Martha Lynn, Mark Edward, and their new son, Todd Andrew. Also the Carl B. Metzger, III, family came with son Carl Buell, IV. They too are being congratulated on the recent arrival of a son, Christopher Scott. These babies will probably be the first baptized at St. Francis'-in-the-Fields, Sugartown.

We are busy planning our first Fall Fair which will be held in the new building on November 2nd. Mrs. Chester Bishop is the chairman of this event.

On October 13th our Cornerstone is to be laid with the Rev. Peter C. Van der Heil, rector of St. George's Church, Ardmore, and Dean of the Chester Convocation, officiating. The clergy and congregations of the neighboring Episcopal Churches, the clergy who formerly served the mission, officials of the Convocation of Chester, members and friends of the congregation have all been invited to attend this service.

Thus, before our sixth anniversary on Thanksgiving Day, our mission moves into new quarters. May God grant that all the years in the future can continue in the warm friendly way that has prevailed through all the ups and downs in the past.

THE MISSION COMMITTEE *of*
St. Francis'-in-the-Fields Episcopal Mission
Sugartown, Penna.

December 1, 1963

Dear Miss Richmond,

We, the Mission Committee, wish to express our appreciation to you for the historical sketch of Saint Francis'-in-the-Fields which you so completely outlined. The recollection of these incidents brings back fond memories of those colorful days.

Your efforts in this and many other services in the past receive our heartfelt gratitude.

Sincerely yours,

J R Tiverman
Chester E Bishop
Margaret D. Wright

RECORD OF FOUNDERS

of

St. Francis'-in-the-Fields Episcopal Mission

Sugartown, Penna.

The Rt. Rev. J. Gillespie Armstrong, *Bishop of Pennsylvania*

The Rt. Rev. Oliver J. Hart, *Retired Bishop of Pennsylvania*

The Rev. Peter C. Van der Heil, *Dean, Convocation of Chester*

The Rev. Edwin A. Garrett, III,- Vicar, St. Francis'-in-the-Fields

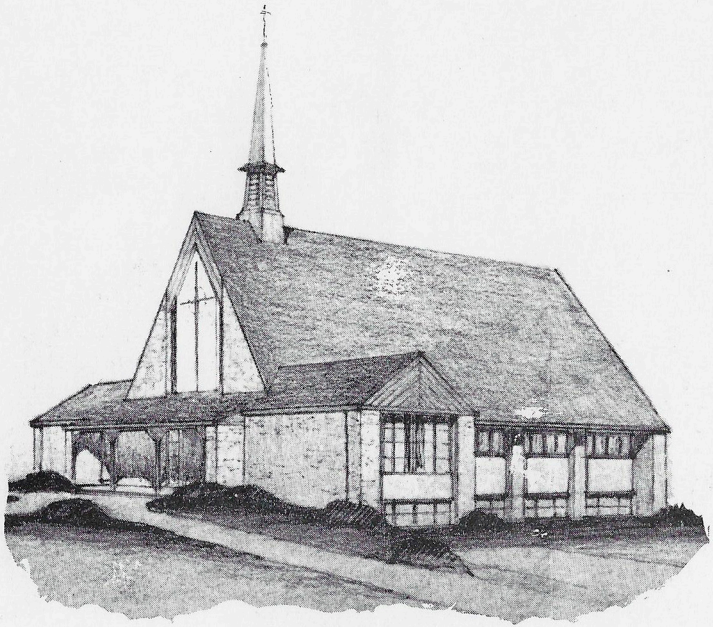
Mr. James R. Tinsman, *Chairman, Mission Committee*

Mr. Chester E. Bishop, *Secretary, Mission Committee*

Mr. Morgan T. Ridington, *Treasurer, Mission Committee*

The Mission Committee wishes to thank

Mr. Roy Lindley,	who printed this booklet.
Mrs. Chester Bishop,	whose art work appears on the inside of the front cover.
Mrs. Morgan Ridington,	who prepared these pages for printing.



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Sugartown
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